

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun introduces a clause that describes someone or something mentioned in the main clause. The person or thing the pronoun refers to is called the antecedent because it precedes the relative pronoun. The most common relative pronouns are *qui* and *que*.

[1] QUI

Qui (who, which, that) serves as the subject of the verb in the relative clause that it introduces. It is used for both persons and things.

[relative clause]
Où est *la fille* **qui** parle si bien? *Where is the girl who speaks so well?*
[antecedent] [subject] [verb]

[relative clause]
Voilà *une voiture* **qui** coûte cher. *There is a car that is expensive.*
[antecedent] [subject] [verb]

NOTE: The verb of a relative clause introduced by *qui* agrees with its antecedent noun or stress pronoun.

[relative clause]
C'est *toi* **qui** en es responsable. *You are the one who is responsible for it.*
[antecedent] [subject] [verb]

[2] QUE

Que (whom, which, that) serves as the direct object of the verb in a relative clause and is usually followed by a subject noun or pronoun. It is used for both persons and things.

[relative clause]
C'est *l'ami* **que** nous aimons. *It's the friend (that) we like.*
[antecedent] [object] [subject] [verb]

[relative clause]
Voilà *le sac* **que** Lucie veut. *Here is the bag (that) Lucie wants.*
[antecedent] [object] [subject] [verb]

NOTE:

1. The relative pronoun is always expressed in French although it is frequently omitted in English.

C'est la chanson **que** j'adore. *That's the song (that) I love.*

2. *Que* becomes *qu'* before a vowel.

Je vais acheter le livre **qu'il** recommande. *I am going to buy the book (that) he recommends.*